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TO:

The Deputy Secretary

FROM:

H - Brian Atwood

With concurrence of: obtained

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SUBJECT:

Briefing Paper for the Deputy Secretary/PRC

Meeting on Argentina

We have received, literally at the eleventh hour, a draft briefing paper for you to use at a PRC meeting on Argentina scheduled for Wednesday, May 14. The central issue posed by the options paper is whether we should consider improving relations with Argentina, particularly by permitting the sale of military training to Argentina.

I very much regret that this paper was sent to H so late clevano processo ... in the day To permit military training to Argentina, as is recommended by ARA, will require ac note modification of the Humphrey/Kennedy Amendment which prohibits various kinds of military sales to Argentina. Frat, from a practical standpoint it is probably already too late to ask Congress to act on this this c Normally speaking, the most appropriate vehicle for amending the Humphrey/Kennedy Amendment would be the FY 81 Foreign Assistance Authorization Bill. This bill has already been marked up and reported by the two foreign realtions committees of both Houses. and it is expected that the House will begin debate on this bill next Monday with votes to be expected possibly on Tuesday and the Senate will take up the bill sometime shortly thereafter. At this point, therefore, the Administration would be required to send up special legislation, which would require hearings new markups and would attract a great deal of attention.

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issue, I am not optimistic as to how the would react to such an Administration proposal. Predictably, liberals will oppose any sign that the Administration is weakening its human tights stance toward Argentina; while conservatives are likely to react negatively in view of recent Argentine statements and actions on the issue of the grain embargo to the Soviet Union.

More importantly, I fear that a shift of policy now would assume a political symbolism that goes well beyond the character of the decision itself. I think we must assume that Senator Kennedy, an author of the amendment, will make this into a campaign issue. Editorial writers and Administration watchers are likely to interpret instancion as a water shed decision representing a new direction in the Administration's policy. There will undoubtedly be speculation that the decision be influenced and attitudes of the new Secretary.

I strongly urge that if there is a strong desire to modify our policies toward Argentina, as suggested by ARA, that no final decision be taken until the new Secretary has been consulted.

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